Memories on a high note

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It's nostalgia time as singer Anil Hazare revives Talat Mahmood's golden moments

TASVEER teri dil mera behela na sakegi. The words and the silken voice caught the imagination of lakhs, who grabbed copies of the non-filmi album. The song skyrocketed Talat Mahmood — who died four years ago — to the hall of fame as one of the greatest singers that India has produced. On **Saturday**, his birth anniversary, audiences will cherish his memory through Anil Hazare's voice during the programme **Remembering Talat Mahmood: *Tasveer Banata Hoon*** at **Russian Cultural Centre**. Hazare will sing both Mahmood's evergreen film and non-film melodies in an exercise in nostalgia for lovers of the golden era.

Hazare — who's a student of light classical music and as well as Banarasi *gayaki* from Malaya Chakravarty — says, "He was already a hit singer in Kolkata, where he called himself Tapan Kumar. In Mumbai, he called himself Talat Mahmood (which was perhaps his real name) and was given his first break by Anil Biswas in *Arzoo*. Then he was wooed by directors like Naushad and Khayyam. With O P Nayyar, he sang immortal songs like *Pyar par bas to nahi hai* (*Sone Ki Chidiya*) in the mid-fifties."

Despite duets with almost every leading female singer like Lata and Asha Mangeshkar, Shamshad, Suraiya and Geeta Dutt, Mahmood never achieved the kind of adulation that Mohammed Rafi or Kishore Kumar did. "We hear there was politics in the industry. Certain people would say that if he sings, we won't be a part of the movie. He couldn't get along with Rafi because he was close to Mukesh." Mahmood even pushed Mukesh's name when the latter was out of work, reveals Hazare.

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Remembers veteran music director Khayyam, who was among the first to use Mahmood's voice, "I met him in Kolkata in 1946 when his non-filmi song had already become a hit. When he came to Mumbai, I recorded *Sham-e-Gamki Kazm* (*Footpath*) in 1952." Picturised with Dilip Kumar, the song was a runaway hit and is now a classic. "He had those typical Lucknow mannerisms and was always well turned out. After that, other songs of mine with Mahmood like *Aagayi Phir Se Bahar* and *Ro Ro Bheeta Jeevan Sara* became hits."

The Ismat Chugtai-produced *Lala Rukh* even had Mahmood playing the hero, as well as singing the songs. On why Mahmood never made it big, Khayyam says, "He didn't get the backing of stars. The style had changed by then, going away from melody to a more rhythmic, loud kind of music. His style was soft and melodious, emotional and sentimental." Despite it all, the singer did leave behind indelible imprints in the sands of time.